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Tuesday 5th March 2024 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray, A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

# 'LITHIUM LICENCES MUST BE RECINDED'

Councillors in West Wicklow are to send a letter of objection to the Board of Management of Coillte, to express their unanimous opposition to the continued prospecting for Lithium in the Moylisha Hill area of South West Wicklow. They are also calling for Coillte to deny access to their land holdings for that purpose.

Blackstairs Lithium Limited (BLL), a subsidiary of Chinese industrial giant Ganfeng Lithium Corporation, holds eleven contiguous prospecting licenses covering a total area of almost 300km in south-east Carlow and South-west Wicklow, for the purpose of the exploration of Lithium, a metal used in the manufacture of rechargeable batteries for phones, laptops and other electronic devices.

This year BLL plan to carry out a drilling pro-

gramme at Moylisha Hill which is expected to last up to five months and will consist of two diamond drill rigs operating for 12 hours per day, six days per week. This news has sparked fears of potential environmental damage and water contamination.

The letter of opposition from Baltinglass Municipal District councillors was proposed by Fianna Fail councillor John Mullen.

"I have been opposed to the environmental damage that a potential

Lithium mine in this area would inflict on a close rural community who are attempting to sustainably continue farming and to continue to grow the outdoor recreation tourism economy with the Wicklow Way and archaeological heritage," said Cllr Mullen.

"I have formally opposed several of the prospecting licences and supported the local community who have been actively campaigning on this matter for years. Lithium is a very valuable



Noah Baker, Lee McGuirk, Peter Cleary and Paddy O'Connell are pictured at the finale of the 'Freezebruary Challenge' at Greystones Harbour last Thursday. Noah, Peter and Paddy undertook the challenge to raise funds for their friend Lee. See more, page 2. Pic: Michael Kelly

## Don't delete mothers from the Constitution

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rare earth mineral in the production of electric batteries but this company ultimately owned by Chinese Corporations cannot provide any environmental protection for what is a unique and beautiful part of the Garden of Ireland. Any Lithium mine would be devastating for the rural area and its vibrant community.

"I was the only Councillor to challenge Minister Eamon Ryan on this when he visited Wicklow County Council last year and was alarmed at his refusal to rule out lithium extraction in Ireland despite the extensive material available on the environmental damage such mining processes inflicts on our landscape.

"Wicklow and Coillte have been partners for

generations and our County and indeed the Moylisha area has significant land holdings devoted to forestry and native and sustainable industry which as an added tourism benefit for outdoor recreation. This letter will convey our unanimous opposition to the continuance of prospecting and asks that they no longer allow Blackstairs Lithium access to their lands for these purposes.

"As a local Wicklow man I understand that we have a duty of care to the next generation to protect and nurture our unique Uplands landscape. We are only custodians of the land and this fight to prevent its destruction by mining for Lithium will be the test of our determination to protect the Garden of Ireland."

Continued on page 7

## LOUISE D'ARCY PGA HEAD PROFESSIONAL THE PRO SHOP @ WICKLOW GOLF CLUB

Join Louise D'Arcy PGA Pro on the 8th of March for **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY** for a 2 1/2 hour Golf Clinic for Beginners and buffet lunch €30. Experienced Golfers play open comp and lunch, same price.

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# Friends of Lee McGuirk complete the 'Freezebruary Challenge' in Greystones

Last Thursday afternoon saw the dedicated friends of Lee McGuirk complete their 'Freezebruary Challenge' at Greystones Harbour, a month-long series of icy dips to raise funds for their friend.

Throughout the month of February, they did a daily swim in freezing cold water, adding a minute to their time in the water each day. "As the minutes get longer, the challenge gets tougher," they posted on their Instagram page (freezebruaryforlee2024), "but it's nothing compared to what Lee has faced. Each swim is a testament of his strength. It's been an incredible journey battling the sea every day, and with your amazing support we've made it this far. We want to thank everyone who has cheered us on and donated to support our friend."

Just before Christmas, 21 year old Lee McGuirk received a devastating stage 4 cancer diagnosis of Sarcoma, a bone and muscle cancer, and was told by doctors that he

had just a few years to live.

"Lee's journey began with extreme pain, leading to multiple hospital visits. Doctors have difficulty detecting this type of cancer and unfortunately in my brother's case, like many others, it was caught too late," writes Lee's sister Amy on his GoFundMe page.

"The prognosis of Lee's diagnosis was the hardest thing we as a family, and his close friends who care deeply about him had to go through. Being told at 21 your life will end in the next few years 'at best', is something no one could ever prepare you for, we were all in complete shock and still are. Despite the challenges, Lee, a resilient fighter has undergone spinal surgery and start-

ed his chemotherapy.

"Our focus is to create memories and tick off Lee's bucket list of life through this GoFundMe initiative. Lee's cancer is terminal and incurable, we wish we were raising funds for experimental trials or potential treatments. Regrettably none are accessible in Ireland currently, however with the GoFundMe support we will send Lee's scans worldwide, seeking more answers. However, me his little sister and my mother Laura will go to the end of the earth to make sure Lee has the best memories with the ones he loves the most over the next while. For those familiar with Lee, his infectious smile and personality and ability to make anyone laugh, have earned this campaign the title of 'Lee's Retirement fund'."



Friends of Lee McGuirk Peter Cleary, Paddy O'Connell and Noah Baker with supporters at Greystones Harbour for the finale of the Freezebruary Challenge.

So far over €35,000 has been raised by the GoFundMe campaign.

Noah Baker, Paddy O'Connell and Peter Cleary completed every day of the challenge, and other participants took part along the way,

Though their challenge is over, the GoFundMe page for Lee, created by Lee's sister Amy and mum Laura, remains open:

[gofundme.com/f/lees-retirement-fund](https://gofundme.com/f/lees-retirement-fund)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Because of the dishonesty in the formation of this Government I don't normally listen to the news or talk shows. However, while waiting for Mass on 11th January 2024 there was a report from The Hague - South Africa was taking a case against Israel for genocide. Can someone tell me the difference between it and the murder of an unborn baby. The word murder replaced with the natural word abortion given to nature, man or beast.

South Africa also said it was wrong to turn off the water to Gaza. When I campaigned against the water charges the council turned the water off to my house, - the very day Una my wife came home after a serious cancer operation.

When are we likely to get an enquiry into the robbery by the Government, its Ministers and lawyers of the people who had to pay unnecessarily charges for their relatives while in a nursing home. We need an indepth investigation to determine who and what they knew, similar to the RTE one going on now.

Charlie Keddy

## Street Feast announces changes for 2024

Now in its 14th year, Street Feast will be held over two days instead of one for the first time meaning a full weekend of community celebrations all across the country. Street Feast will also take place a month earlier on 25th and 26th May. This is a great opportunity for people to get together with their neighbours and celebrate all that is great about their community.

Speaking about the changes, Neighbourhood Network CEO and Founder of Street Feast, Sam Bishop, said: "Running Street Feast over two days instead of one will give people more opportunity to celebrate together and plan around Ireland's ever-changing weather. But the essence of Street Feast remains rooted in our mission to encourage neighbourly connections and camaraderie through shared meals, gatherings, games and conversations."

No matter what kind of place you live in, everyone is invited to participate and host gatherings. It doesn't matter if you live in an apartment or house, all you need is a space to bring people together. Street Feast has had parties organised in front gardens, on streets and greens, in car parks, laneways, local parks and community centres. Street Feast 2024 will see over 1,250 communities celebrating and connecting with people in their neighbourhood.

Register at [StreetFeast.ie](https://StreetFeast.ie) today. Once registered you'll receive a FREE Street Feast party pack, complete with bunting, posters, invites and a brilliant DIY guide.

## 'The Arklow Question: Sectarian Disturbances in the 1890's'

A talk in Wicklow Library

Wicklow Town Library is coming to the end of the 2023/24 talks schedule and what better way to end than with a talk by the very engaging historian Pat Power.

Pat's talk entitled "The Arklow Question: Sectarian Disturbances in the 1890's" will take place in Wicklow Town library at 7 p.m. on Thursday March 7th.

In this highly illustrated lecture, Pat will look at the series of events that convulsed Arklow's religious communities for two decades as evangelical protestants took to street preaching in Southern

Ireland during the latter half of the 19th century.

Disturbances saw clergymen and towns people jailed, dozens of police and troops deployed to control the peace and commercial life in Arklow disrupted. The Arklow Question, as it was referred to in the British House of Commons, was eventually to be settled locally after many failed efforts.

Booking required - to book by e-mail to [Wicklowlocalstudies@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:Wicklowlocalstudies@wicklowcoco.ie) or call Wicklow Library 0404 67025.



Children at a Street Feast in Wicklow

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# 'Vote Yes to modernise Ireland's Constitution'



Cllr Anne Ferris

Bray based Labour Councillor Anne Ferris is calling on residents in Co. Wicklow to vote Yes-Yes in this week's referendums "to modernise Ireland's Constitution".

Cllr. Ferris says "The current language in our Constitution is not reflective of the diverse roles and contributions of individuals in modern Irish society. The Labour Party believes it is time to replace this language with a broader recognition of the value of care, irrespective of gender."

"The outdated language within our Constitution perpetuates gender stereotypes and restricts the recognition of diverse family structures, hindering progress towards a more inclusive society."

"The Constitution's narrow definition of family, based solely on marriage, fails to acknowledge the rich diversity of family life in Ireland today. Families come in all shapes and sizes, and our Constitution must reflect this reality. We need a more inclusive def-

inition that recognises and respects all forms of family.

"We in the Labour Party have a clear vision for a radical model of care that supports all citizens, from cradle to grave. We envision a welfare state that prioritises care, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their background, receives the support they need. This referendum presents an opportunity to build a fairer and more compassionate society for all."

"I am urging all citizens to vote Yes-Yes in the upcoming referendum on family and care. Let us now seize this opportunity to modernise our Constitution. Together, let's build a future where care is valued, families are recognised, and everyone has the opportunity to thrive," concluded Cllr. Ferris.



Roisin Daly and Amanda Mooney are pictured at the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon & 10K Run in Avondale Forest Park, Rathdrum. See more, page 14.

# 'Vote No to these terribly written amendments'



Ciaran Hogan, Aontú

Ciaran Hogan, local Wicklow representative for Aontú, has called on the people of Wicklow to Vote No and No this week to the amendments to the constitution.

Mr Hogan says that "Both of the amendments are unnecessary, terribly written, and so open to abuse that it is shocking any party would support them. Yet Aontú is the only party in The Dail calling for a No-No vote."

"At no point does the constitution say, imply, and infer that a woman's

place is in the home. If that were true it would come as quite a shock to our two previous Presidents; Mary McAleese and Mary Robinson."

"Secondly there was no pre-legislative scrutiny, no debate, and the interdepartmental report on the outcome of a yes vote is hidden from public by Roderic

O'Gorman until after the vote. A lack of transparency of this scale can only mean it is not in the public interest to go along with the Government proposal."

"The Government is trying to wedge in 'durable relationships' - which is an undefined term - on a equal basis to married families. This could have serious dangerous consequences on many different areas. It will lead to situations where courts are decid-

ing on a subjective basis what is a relationship."

"In the Care amendment, this is one of the few references of Women in the constitution, and the Government want to erase it on International Woman's Day. The slight wording change is worrisome; 'endeavour to ensure' will be replaced by 'shall strive to support' which takes pressure off government to really do anything for families."

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# Council publishes Climate Action Plan

Wicklow County Council has published its first ever Climate Action Plan which provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to transition to a lower carbon and more climate resilient future for the citizens of County Wicklow.

The Plan features an ambitious 135 Actions which include a major focus on community engagement to combine all our efforts in reducing the effects of Climate Change.

It contains 112 Actions for the County and 23 Actions for the Arklow Decarbonisation Zone. Arklow has been designated as a pilot decarbonisation zone where the Council will test mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity measures and replicate on a wider scale.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, welcomed the publication of the Climate Action Plan saying: "The plan highlights how communities can benefit from the low carbon tran-

sition. This means warmer, more efficient homes; better travel options, more liveable towns, more sustainable consumer choices and a better environment for future generations."

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, commented: "Our overarching goal is to transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral county. Having this plan in place with a targeted and monitored approach to delivering actions across all services of the local authority will help us to meet our targets of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and improve our energy efficiency by 50% by 2030."



Wicklow County Council Cathaoirleach Aoife Flynn-Kennedy, Climate and Biodiversity SPC Cathaoirleach Lourda Scott, and WCC's Climate Action Team at the launch of the Climate Action Plan

Cllr Lourda Scott, Cathaoirleach of the Climate & Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee, added: "We are delighted to launch a Climate Action Plan for Wicklow. The hard work

and dedication of all involved is to be commended. This collaborative plan creates a pathway to reach our climate targets and respond to the challenges that climate change poses to us all."

Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services, Wicklow County Council said: "The Climate Action Plan demonstrates Wicklow County Councils commitment to delivering on reducing the

impacts of Climate Change. Our plan is a result of extensive engagement, both internal and externally, with various stakeholders, that has delivered a Plan which incorporates

robust structures and processes for ongoing monitoring and reporting. The actions within the plan are accompanied by defined indicators to gauge progress accurately."

The Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029 is available to view online at Wicklow County Councils Website at [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) under the Climate and Biodiversity section.

# Community orchard planting in Newtownmountkennedy

On Saturday 24th February, the Newtownmountkennedy Tidy Towns planted 50 heritage fruit trees across the town as part of a project they are calling a 'Dispersed Community Orchard.'

It is inspired by similar ones in Navan and Monaghan Town and the idea is to plant small pockets of fruit trees dispersed across all the estates and green areas in

the town. These trees will produce flowers and fruit that will benefit pollinators and birds, but can also be collected and eaten by everyone in the community. The project

was created by Newtown Tidy Towns vice-chair and Social Democrats local election candidate Danny Alvey.

"Thank you so much to everyone who came out and helped us plant apple, pear and plum trees in the Newtown GAA pitch, Garden Village, Kiladreenan Close, Sycamore Drive and Mountain View

Drive," said Danny. "The project is a fun way to teach everyone about the benefits for nature and your own health from growing your own food, especially children. We have another 40 trees to plant over the coming weeks in the rest of the estates in the town and one in Roundwood.

"Here in Newtown, it will complement well the wildflower corridor that we created last year, with eight patches sown across the town. And when the trees start producing fruit in years to come I hope we can have a community event to collect it all and make jams and desserts."

The project was funded by a tree grant from Wicklow County Council and sponsorship from local business Wicklow Wolf Brewing Company, who also had volunteers along on the day.

"I'd love to see similar initiatives like this in every town and village across the county," said Danny. "Growing our own food and making use of locally foraged fruit was once much more common in Ireland and if we are to have a sustainable future on this island and planet its something we will need to return to. There are so many benefits for nature, food security, our physical and mental health and also our sense of community spirit. If elected to Wicklow County Council in June I will be making initiatives like this a key feature of my term as a local public representative."



Jen Quinn and Danny Alvey of Newtown Tidy Towns and Simon Lynch of Wicklow Wolf



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# Contractors to be appointed for Charlesland Dual Carriageway

NTA funding of €1.2 million has been approved to upgrade five roundabouts in Charlesland. Cllr Stephen Stokes, Cathaoirleach of the Greystones Municipal District pressed for an update at the February 2024 district meeting.

Confirmation was received that Wicklow County Council will need to appoint contractors to do the work. Cllr Stephen Stokes stated: "The funding for these upgrades is welcome. I have been pressing for road safety measures for some time. I would like to see this work carried out as efficiently as possible."

The work is expected to formalise a number of crossings for Aldborough, Charlesland, Glenheron, Hawkins Wood and Seabourne View. Many of the crossings on the Charlesland dual carriageway currently operate without a lights system. Cllr Stokes added: "Wicklow County Council staff have been re-directed to other projects, and therefore a contracting company is needed. The biggest material cost is the lights."

Cllr Stephen Stokes highlighted the increased traffic in the area. He further remarked: "As the population continues to expand, there are more vehicles on the road. Trying to cross the Glen roundabout between Charlesland Wood and Seabourne is particularly challenging. I found this myself when crossing over. So we need to take decisive measures to assist people."

Cllr Stokes concluded: "You really cannot put a price on road safety, especially for children. That is why this investment is needed as a priority for pedestrians and cyclists along the Charlesland dual carriageway."

"I will continue to seek improvements for Charlesland, Delgany, Greystones, Kilcoole, Killadreenan and Newcastle," concluded Cllr Stokes.



Cathaoirleach of Greystones, Cllr Stephen Stokes

## Greystones delegation visits Holyhead for St. David's Day

Last Thursday, Greystones Cathaoirleach Stephen Stokes and Kathleen Kelleher travelled to Holyhead in Wales to participate in the St. David's Day celebrations on 1st March. This followed a visit from the Holyhead twinning partners to Greystones for the Ireland v Wales Six Nations rugby match.



Cllr Gerry Walsh with Welsh visitors Alan Williams, Richard Burnell, Sue Williams, and Dewi Thomas, watching the Six Nations match

On St. David's Day, Wales' National Day, schoolchildren from Holyhead form a parade around the town to mark their special day. St. David's Day is a major day in Holyhead and Greystones is honoured to be part of the event.

"As usual, our Holyhead friends will be over to help us with our St. Patrick's Day Parade," said Kathleen. "They are always a major part of our celebrations for Ireland's National Day."

"While we are in Holyhead this week, Cllr. Stokes and I hope to make rowing club connections. Greystones Rowing Club would be in a position to facilitate a visit from Holyhead on the May Bank Holiday weekend."



Cllr Derek Mitchell and Fine Gael candidate Louise Fenelon Gaskin (pictured) have welcomed the new accurate timetables at Greystones train station. "Finally the correct timetable is being displayed, 10 weeks after it came into effect," said Cllr Mitchell. "I had to write three emails to get management to put up the correct ones. At one stage there were four different timetables showing different times. This is a basic error for a railway to make. No wonder people complain of unreliability. We also need a longer term plan to improve the rail service South of Bray."

# 2024 Greystones Municipal District People of the Year Awards



The Awards will be presented in the Greystones Golf Club, Greystones on Thursday 25th April, 2024 at 8pm

Application forms and tickets are available from Greystones Municipal District, Tel: 01 2876694 or Email: Kcoughla@wicklowcoco.ie / greystonesmd@wicklowcoco.ie

Ticket Price €35

www.wicklow.ie

Closing date for receipt of nominations is Thursday 28th March 2024

- Sportsperson of the Year
- Civic Award
- Special Person of the Year
- Cultural Person of the Year
- Commercial Award
- Young Entrepreneur of the Year



GREYSTONES MUNICIPAL DISTRICT in association with



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

### SECTION 75 - ROADS ACT, 1993 PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF PUBLIC ROAD

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice of the temporary closure of the following public road.

**Road to be closed**

R762 Mill Road and Church Road, Greystones, Co Wicklow.

**Period of closure**

From 10.30 am to 12.30 pm Sunday 17th March, 2024..

**Alternative Routes**

R761 Killincarrig Village and Lower Kindlestown Road.

**Reason for Closure**

This is to facilitate the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

# Green Party reps decry seafront planning decision

Green Party representatives Deputy Steven Matthews and Cllr Erika Doyle have expressed their disappointment in the decision by An Bord Pleanala to grant permission for the demolition of 1 Marlborough Terrace on the seafront and the construction of an arcade. They believe that this will impact the character of the Victorian seafront and have an overall negative impact on the seafront area.

Cllr Erika Doyle said, "I'm very disappointed by this decision and judging by the amount of people who have contacted me, this is shared by a large number of people in the town. The demotion of this building to allow for construction of an arcade will negatively impact the Victorian character of the seafront - we should be protecting it and moving to act and penalise when a building is let fall beyond repair. It's not right that buildings can be let get into such a condition that their 'value' depletes and it becomes viable to request to knock them.



Green Party councillor Erika Doyle and TD Steven Matthews

"The second aspect is gambling. While it's listed as children's amusements, it will be interesting to see if this is simply fun rides and activities or machines

that require coins to be pumped in over and over again with the distant lure of a 'win'. I believe these plant the seeds of an attraction to gambling. Years ago arcades had waltzers and slides and water spray games etc - where you got some fun for your money - increasingly they are about mindlessly spending money."

Deputy Steven Matthews said, "This is an extremely disappointing decision by An Bord Pleanala. I made a submission on the original application questioning the proliferation and concentration of gambling/amusements on our Seafront. Not only have the Board allowed another amusement outlet but unbeliev-

ably they are allowing a good structure to be demolished.

"The refurbishment and reuse of existing buildings is key to addressing decarbonisation of construction. Construction has a massive carbon footprint and our Green Party policy paper seeks to reduce embodied carbon through reuse and refurbishing.

"I have concerns that this development may evolve into further gambling based on the application seeking 11pm closing! What type of children's amusements needs to be open until 11pm? The Board have applied a condition that it closes by 9pm but these closing times can be difficult to enforce. I strongly believe that this is a poor decision for our town."



Halyna Tropina and Sean Olohan from Wicklow & District Lions Club at the Wicklow Ukrainian Hub Remembrance Day event, marking two years of war in Ukraine.

# 'LITHIUM LICENCES MUST BE RECINDED'

Continued from page 1

Also voicing his opposition last week, Sinn Fein TD John Brady said "I am calling on Coillte to deny access to this mining company, and for the Department of the Environment to rescind the granting of a drilling licence to Blackstairs Lithium Ltd in the Moylisha area of Wicklow. Despite being a relatively new industry, lithium mining has a record of land and water pollution, along with ecosystem destruction. The proposed drilling site in Moylisha is only 500 meters from residential property, which is serviced by its own water well.

"The potential impact on the environment, on the health of local people, on farming, and on tourism with the Wicklow Way and the rich archaeological history of the area is significant. And I again want to call on Coillte to take these issues into account.

"In Minister Eamon Ryan we have a minister who is causing chaos on our road transport systems to try and drive motorists off the roads, yet here he and his department are supporting a mining project with the potential devastating impact on the local area, at a time when research conducted by independent academic groups is warning that the overmining of lithium across the globe to meet the demand for car batteries is so damaging to the environment that it's actually endangering plans to meet

the 1.5 global heating target.

"The reality here is that lithium mining is deepening global environmental and social inequalities. We really do not need Minister Ryan and his government colleagues taking these problems to the door of Southwest Wicklow."

Fine Gael Local Election Candidate Peter Stapleton has also weighed in on the matter, and has accused the Green Party Leader of 'spuriously justifying' his issuing of mining licences."The Greens have gone into panic mode now that they have been exposed as having given at least 12 licences for Lithium mining speculation," said Mr Stapleton.

"Lithium mining will be an environmental disaster for Wicklow. Minister Ryan should cancel the at-least 12 speculator licences he has granted and stop his Party circulating selective information. Lithium Mining should be added to the Minister's ban on the extraction of oil and gas and Mr Ryan should be looking at international research from amongst others the Georgia Institute of Technology in the USA which shows battery technology can be developed using other materials than the desecration that is Lithium mining. The Green Party needs to face up to its error in granting Lithium Licences for Wicklow and accept Minister Ryan has made a mistake."

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications recently responded to

Wicklow County Council's request for further information on the Moylisha Hill exploration. The Department stated that a surface and groundwater risk assessment was carried out on the drilling area by external environmental consultants and they found the risk to be low.

According to the Department, in the event that a screening assessment indicates that there are potential risks associated with the drilling, then Blackstairs Lithium will treat the raw water used in drilling.

The main concern in using surface waters for drilling purposes is that pathogens such as faecal coliforms originating from livestock or wild animals and birds, could potentially be introduced into a groundwater body. Treatment of surface waters in advance of injecting them underground minimises the risk posed from such pathogens. Furthermore, Blackstairs Lithium are required to seal the top of the borehole to prevent surface water ingress.

"In 2022 the Geoscience Regulation Office visited multiple sites of previous drilling on this Prospecting Licence and all visited sites were found to have been sealed. There has been no drilling since that time and all future drilling will be subject to site visits," according to the Department.

## Charlie KEDDY

ANTI-ABORTION CANDIDATE



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# Fine Gael selects Local Election candidates for Greystones Electoral Area

Fine Gael has selected Louise Fenelon Gaskin and Aileen Lennon to run as candidates for the upcoming Local Elections in Greystones Electoral Area.

The Fine Gael selection convention was held on Thursday 22nd February attended by Wicklow Minister Simon Harris.

These two female candidates have a strong record of serving the community and both have huge potential as future Councillors in Greystones, Delgany, Kilcoole, Newcastle & Killadreenan.

Minister Harris said: "I am absolutely delighted to welcome Louise Fenelon Gaskin and Aileen Lennon as candidates for the Local Elections in the Greystones area. I know them both well and I am delighted to support their candidacy and would ask residents to lend them their vote in June in the Local Elections. They bring experience, energy, local knowledge and a can-do attitude to the campaign and I know our community would benefit hugely from their election as Councillors. I would also be really delighted in

my own work to get to work alongside Louise and Aileen and I believe we would make a great team locally and nationally in trying to get projects delivered and issues addressed in the area. It was great to see a packed room and a big crowd in Delgany for our convention on Thursday to select these candidates.

"Aileen and Louise, both have a passion for our community and have strong track records of voluntary work and activism, business experience and community involvement. "Aileen Lennon has been an active member and advocate for the local community, having been involved in many organisations in support of Greystones, Delgany, Kilcoole, Willow Grove, and Newcastle.

"Aileen has worked with and supported locally run charities in both homelessness and domestic violence. As a Scout Leader in Delgany since 1999 she has delivered

many programmes that have benefitted the lives of countless young people and is committed to making communities stronger. She has shown her ability to effectively implement positive change in the community.

"Louise Fenelon Gaskin is a deeply committed member of the community who strives for the betterment of all those who surround her. She's a native of Greystones with strong connections from across the County and has worked diligently in a wide range of local organisations and community groups and crucially has invested time and effort into delivering positive change and reform for schools in the area.

"I know Louise and Aileen will address pressing issues faced by Greystones and will work tirelessly for our community. I really look forward to canvassing with them both and supporting their campaigns.



Minister Simon Harris and Cllr Derek Mitchell with new Local Election candidate for the Greystones area, Louise Fenelon Gaskin and Aileen Lennon

"I also want to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Derek Mitchell for all his diligent service as a County Councillor. Derek is a gentleman, a very

committed and hardworking Councillor and someone who has served our community with distinction. I fully respect his decision, after such a long

period of public service, to decide not to seek re-election and to pass the baton to Louise and Aileen. Our community has benefitted in so many

ways from his work, particularly when it comes to his work on our Dart service and public transport and transport more generally. I am proud to call

him a colleague and a friend and I wish him every continued success and thank him for his support for Louise and Aileen."

## Dunne to run for Fianna Fáil in Wicklow District

Cllr. Gail Dunne will be seeking re-election to Wicklow County Council following the recent Fianna Fáil selection convention.

The convention was chaired by Minister James Browne TD and in the presence of Senator

Pat Casey, Minister Stephen Donnelly, Senator Malcolm Byrne, Cllr. Tommy Annesley as well

as many of Cllr. Dunne's family and supporters.

Speaking after being officially selected Cllr.

Dunne addressed all in attendance, "it has been a huge honour to be selected to contest the local elections once again. It has been a privilege to represent the people of the Wicklow LEA and I look forward to continuing that representation."

Cllr. Dunne added about the work that has taken place during his term and his plans for the future "We have achieved so much around the area, the new library, redevelopment of Fitzwilliam Square, the footpath from

Ashford to Ballinahinch Woods and the footpath from Glenealy to Rathnew but we still have so much to achieve. Housing is the big issue and I want to see a continued supply of social, affordable and private housing so people can once again aspire to own their own home."

Cllr. Dunne concluded about look forward to the campaign ahead "we will have a lot of work to do between now and June but we are looking forward to knocking doors and putting in a good campaign."



Cllr Gail Dunne with Senator Pat Casey at the Fianna Fail selection convention

## New Fine Gael candidate announced for new Wicklow/Wexford constituency

Brian Brennan from Gorey has announced that he will be seeking a nomination to run for Fine Gael in the new South Wicklow/North Wexford constituency.

Brian has strong links in Arklow and Gorey and has owned and operated the Arklow Bay Hotel in Arklow and the 64 Bar in Gorey.

He has remained very much involved in community and sporting organisations in both counties and says he is keen to put his name forward to represent the new South Wicklow North Wexford constituency.

"Gorey has not had a TD for over four years and Arklow has not had a TD in the history of

the state, and I want to give both areas an equal voice," said Brian.

"My experience in the community and in business in Arklow and Gorey has put me in a unique position to understand the key issues in both areas and in particular how we should seize this opportunity to build on the connections between both parts of Wicklow and Wexford. I look forward to this huge challenge ahead."



Brian Brennan

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# 'Govt must cut through red tape and place students' needs first'

A packed meeting of concerned parents and stakeholders from Greystones Community College was held last week. They fear that once again they will be left in a state of anxiety and confusion as they wait to see if there are sufficient places for new students this coming September.

Sinn Fein TD John Brady called on Minister for Education Norma Foley to prioritise the welfare of students in Greystones and immediately cut through the red tape which is "strangling all attempts to progress towards the building of the urgently needed new school in the area". He urged her to meet with the five Wicklow TDs to find a way through the "unnecessary roadblocks" which are in the way of progress.

Deputy Brady said: "The crux of the situation in respect of Greystones Community College is that Minister Norma Foley through her hands off approach to the situation has failed the school, the students, the teachers, and parents. Planning permission for the school was granted twenty months ago on a new 11.5-acre site, but progress has become mired in an overly bureaucratic process, which means that once again, in the new school year in September students on the waiting list cannot be sure of a place in the secondary school.

"The delays in progressing the building of the new school are also resulting in substantial and unnecessary costs to the taxpayer. With over €1 million already having paid out for the lease of prefabs for temporary accommodation, and land rental. The current process as defined by the Minister and her department's insistence that the Greystones Community College building project be lumped in with nine other schools. Which are further subdivided into two groups of five. This is having the effect of slowing down

progress in the process to a snail's pace.

"Last September tenders were sought for all ten schools on the list. The department is currently working their way through the tenders which are valid for 180 days. This will expire in mid-March. There is a scheduled project turnaround time of 65 weeks from commencement to completion for the new school. If the Department of Education continues to place roadblocks in front of the school, it will not be able to complete construction in time to cope with the anticipated influx of students in September 2025. This must become a priority for the Minister.

"Greystones is an area that has witnessed huge growth over the last number of years, with thousands of new homes built in the area. And while the construction of new homes is something that we all want to see, it cannot happen in a vacuum. Development must be accompanied by the necessary levels of infrastructure and services required to support it.

"This has not happened in Greystones. With the result that there are currently 22 pupils in the area who simply don't know where they will be attending secondary school in September. I have spoken to a lot of the parents and the students, and who are experiencing huge levels of stress and anxiety, and who are watching their friends securing places and attending induction days in schools, while they don't know where they are going



Jennifer Whitmore TD with Fiona Toolan and Anya Llewellyn. Deputy Whitmore recently joined with parents of Greystones' 4th, 5th and 6th class students on a demonstration walk in response to the ongoing shortages of secondary school places and the urgent need to build the permanent building for Greystones Community College (GCC).

to be in September, or even if they will have a school place at all.

"Not only is this unacceptable, but failure to act will also see the situation repeated. But it is within the Minister's power to act, to ensure that by September 2025 that the new school is completed and that no other students will be faced with the same levels of anxiety and anguish."

Social Democrat TD Jennifer Whitmore and her colleague Cllr Mark Barry have called on the Minister for Education to urgently answer parents' questions on the school places debacle seen in Greystones this year.

Both Deputy Whitmore

and Cllr Barry also attended last week's meeting.

Speaking after the meeting, Deputy Whitmore said: "A large number of parents in attendance at tonight's meeting were expressing their frustrations and annoyance at the delayed delivery of essential infrastructure when it comes to schools in the area. Unfortunately, we have been here before on this exact issue. Many parents in attendance tonight had to fight for their child's primary school to be built. Now they are experiencing déjà vu, fighting to get the same students secondary school built.

"Currently, three schools in the area are waiting on progress for school build-

ing programmes. Greystones Community College needs its permanent building in Charlesland, while Templecarrig and Colaiste Chraobh Abhann in Kilcoole are waiting to have long-promised extensions progressed. The department needs to get to grips with planning for schools in Wicklow and ensure that population growth and primary school registration numbers direct the timely provision of infrastructure.

"This is all happening while we still have a large cohort of students who need a place for September 2024. Nearly 70 children were without school places in Greystones just a few weeks ago. While two extra classrooms established in Greystones Community College have helped ease the burden, many are still on waiting lists, unsure where they will attend in September. It should never have been allowed to get to this point. And it is so unfair on those students that they have to wait and see, while their peers excitedly make plans for secondary. It is the very opposite of a child-centred approach that we should see from the Department of Education."

Cllr Mark Barry said: "This has been the cause of terrible upset in Greystones for so many families, but it has been acutely felt this year with such a shortfall of classroom spaces. When I was on the board of Greystones Community National School, we consistently faced a shortage of space to meet the increasing demand each year. The department's planning process was consistently last-minute due to insufficient information about the progress of the new construction. With more accurate information and realistic time frames, we could have implemented better planning strategies. To push for progress, we found it necessary to inundate the department with emails and even created a video involving the children to emphasise the urgency of the situation. We need direct interaction here by the department so that we do not see a repeat of this issue again next year."

Minister Simon Harris was represented by his team at the meeting of concerned parents. Speaking



John Brady TD along with Sinn Féin local election candidates for the Greystones Electoral Area Esther Kelly and Brian Fogarty at the meeting last week.

afterwards, Minister Harris said: "We've been working really hard to expand school places in Greystones and indeed throughout County Wicklow. The stress and worry that parents have had to go through in recent weeks in relation to this has been unacceptable. I'm pleased to say that considerable progress has been made."

Minister Harris added "However, it is categorically necessary and urgently required that the Greystones Community College project goes to full construction as soon as possible. Every effort should be put forward now to get this project in full flow in the coming weeks now. We have worked really hard to

secure a site for this school project, and it is now essential that the Department of Education moves ahead with the awarding of the tender.

"I know from speaking with the Department of Education that they have received the tender documentation and are due to make a decision on this very shortly. As recently as this week I was again in touch with the Minister for Education and also very senior officials in the Department of Education to stress the absolute urgency of this. In addition to this school going to construction, I also believe an extension to Temple Carrig School and an extension to Colaiste

Chraobh Abhann in Kilcoole would make a real and important difference.

"These projects should be pushed forward and I have told the Department of Education as much. I am continuing to work with parents throughout the community to make progress on this and in keeping local schools and local parents up to date on a weekly basis.

"If you are a parent who is concerned about school places in the area, please feel free to contact me by email or phone. From my perspective, getting this school project to go to construction urgently is my number one priority."



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

## SECTION 75 - ROADS ACT, 1993 PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF PUBLIC ROAD

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice of the temporary closure of the following public roads.

### Road to be closed

Vevay Road north of Church Road  
Killarney Road north of Church Road  
Main Street Town Hall to Quinsboro Road  
Quinsborough Road  
Eglington Road  
Seymour Road  
Seapoint Road, east of Seymour Road  
Strand Road

### Period of closure

From 1.30 pm until 3.30 pm Sunday 17th March, 2024.

### Alternative Routes

Alternative route for traffic accessing East Bray will be via Putland Road and Sidmonton Road or Meath Road.

Local North - South traffic through Bray will be diverted via Church Road, King Edward Road, Herbert Road and Main Street Bray, North of its junction with Herbert Road. Access will be available to the Herbert Road carpark.

The parade route is from the Town Hall, Vevay Road, Bray (opposite St Patrick's School) proceeding down Main Street, turning right onto Florence Road, Eglington Road, turning right onto Quinsborough, turning left onto Seymour Road, right onto Seapoint Road and concludes on the Strand Road.

Traffic management will be in place during the passing of the parade.

### Reason for Closure

To facilitate the Bray St. Patricks Day parade.



Deputy Jennifer Whitmore and Cllr Mark Barry with Jody Beattles, Phil Moyle and Fiona Toolan

# Brady slams Govt failure to help Scoliosis patients

Sinn Fein TD John Brady has criticised the failure of the three government TDs in Wicklow to support a Sinn Fein motion on Scoliosis which set out exactly how Sinn Fein, in cooperation with parents, advocates, and clinicians, would implement change.

Children with scoliosis and their families protested outside the Dail in support of the Sinn Fein motion last Tuesday evening, including families from Wicklow.

Deputy Brady said: "Government failure has led to a growing crisis affecting children with scoliosis and the alarming increase in waiting lists for necessary surgeries. As a parent this has particular resonance for me, as one of my daughters battles this condition with a significant 45-degree curve in her spine.

"Not that long ago it used to be the common practice that a public health nurse would carry out a simple yet effective exam for early detection of the Adams forward bend test. This allowed for the early identification of scoliosis.

"However, in 2011, due to budget cuts, this crucial screening tool was discontinued. Consequently, children like my daughter are now being diagnosed later, if at all, leading to missed



John Brady TD meets with children with scoliosis outside Leinster House prior to Sinn Fein motion last Tuesday

opportunities for early intervention. The repercussions of delayed diagnosis are severe and far reaching.

"By the time scoliosis is detected in many cases, it's too late for non-invasive measures such as bracing to be effective. Surgery becomes the only viable option, and tragically, the waiting lists for these procedures continue to grow longer, leaving countless

children suffering in pain and discomfort.

"There are currently at least 313 children waiting for life changing surgery. The responsibility for this crisis falls squarely on the shoulders of the government, which has failed our children at every turn. From neglecting early detection efforts to inadequately addressing the backlog of surgical cases, their inaction has left fami-

lies like mine feeling abandoned and desperate for solutions.

"The Government must reinstate essential screening programs, investing in resources for timely diagnosis and treatment, and ensuring that no child languishes on a waiting list when their quality of life hangs in the balance. My daughter, and every child affected by scoliosis, deserves better."

## Call for non-profits in Wicklow to apply for Disability Participation and Awareness Fund

Funding announced by Rethink Ireland and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is set to accelerate access and skills-building for people with disabilities, with a €3.5m injection of funding for the sector to support projects.

The 2024 Disability Participation and Awareness Fund is now open for applications from change-making non-profit organisations focused on supporting people with disabilities to participate in community life.

This includes social, cultural, arts and sports participation, as well as promoting disability awareness and training at a local level, and supporting pathways for young people transitioning through education. Up to six high-performing projects that applied under the 2023 application process are to be awarded up to €1.1m, and up to ten new projects will be eligible to share in funding worth a total of €2.4m.

Projects are encouraged to apply for the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund 2024 at rethinkireland.ie

The announcement of this critical funding for the sector was made at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin, one of the organisations that will receive a share of €1.1 million in funding. The Project Arts Centre's Disrupt Disability Arts Festival is changing the face of the Irish arts

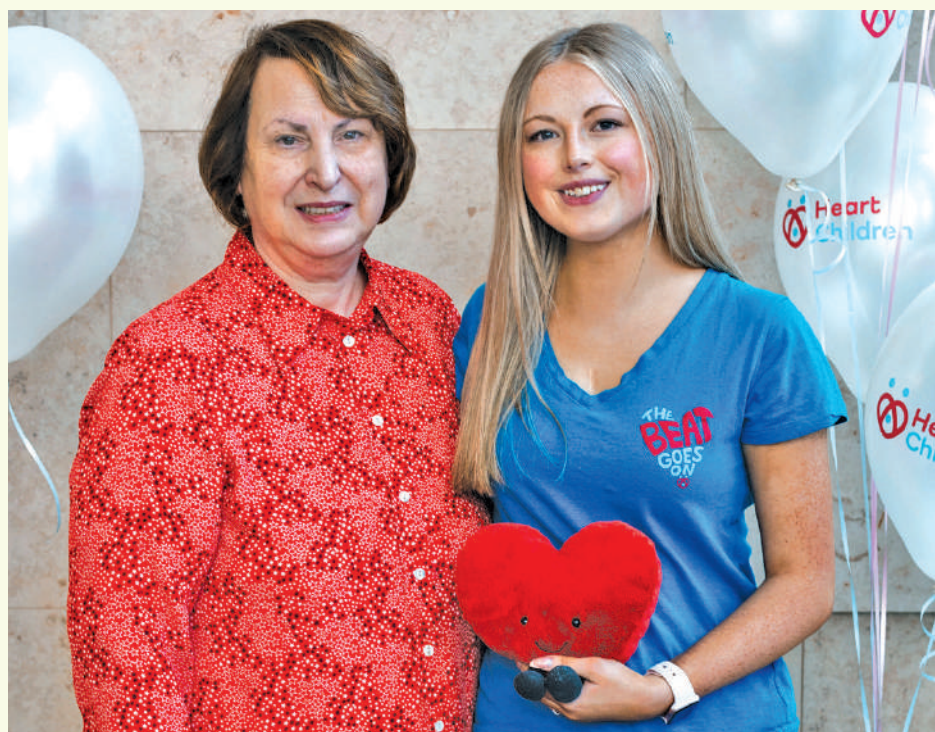
festival ecology, acting as a platform for connection, creativity and communication between the diverse intersections of the Irish disability community, as well as wider society.

Anne Rabbitte TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for Disability at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, commented: "The establishment of the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund is to support essential community-led initiatives around Ireland, and I am deeply pleased to announce funding of €3.5 million to the sector. This latest investment is critical to accelerating progress towards equality and access for people with disabilities in our society.

"As Minister, I am committed to creating communities that work for everyone, where people with disabilities are assured of, as is their right, equal access to social, cultural, arts and sports opportunities, underpinned by stronger disability awareness. The mission is clear: equality first. To this aim, we are delighted to continue our partner-

ship with Rethink Ireland and to support even more projects to carry out vital work in our communities."

Deirdre Mortell, CEO of Rethink Ireland, said: "The time is now on equity and inclusion for people with disabilities. We must design communities for everyone, and we know that social innovation leads the way in delivering this. Social innovations are regularly led by people who have a strong personal connection to the issues they aim to overcome. They often act at a local level, empowering people with lived experiences and those who feel passionately about the success of their communities. They are equitable, investing in talent regardless of background or (perceived) ability. They encourage responsible consumption and growth, and stimulate our economic development. They create jobs. I am proud that through the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund, we will be working with a total of up to 36 dedicated projects by the end of the year that will build skills and remove barriers for people with disabilities across Ireland."



Bronia Robbins and Amy Poynton from Bray, pictured at 'The Beat Goes On' conference, organised by Heart Children, which took place in Dublin.

## Bray represented at Beat Goes On

Almost 19,000 people are estimated to be living with congenital heart disease in Ireland with approximately 500-600 children born here with the condition annually. For more information on Heart Children's supports and services, visit [www.heartchildren.ie](http://www.heartchildren.ie).

Bronia Robbins, Amy Poynton and Laura Heffernan from Bray recently attended The Beat Goes On conference organised by Heart Children, which took place in Dublin the weekend before last. Aimed at young people and adults with congenital heart disease, and their families, the gathering took place as part of Global Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Month.



Laura Heffernan from Bray pictured at The Beat Goes On conference

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# Health Minister launches new Wicklow branch of Parkinson's Ireland

The Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD officially launched the new Wicklow Branch of Parkinson's Ireland at an event in Ashford, County Wicklow, on Monday 26th February.



Minister Donnelly speaking with members of the Wicklow Parkinson's Choir

The event, which was held at the Ashford Community and Heritage Centre, was attended by representatives from a range of Parkinson's support networks in County Wicklow and featured a performance from the Wicklow Parkinsons Choir.

Speaking at the event, Dara MacMahon, Committee member of the new Wicklow Branch of Parkinsons Ireland, said that the establishment of the local branch would provide additional help and support for people living with Parkinsons and their



Betty Cameron, Shane O'Brien, Minister Stephen Donnelly and Dara McMahon at the launch of the new Wicklow branch of Parkinson's Ireland in Ashford Heritage Centre.

families in County Wicklow, opening up a new range of services and supports to people in the County. The new Wicklow Branch will be the 19th branch in the Parkinsons Ireland national network and the organisation is looking forward to supporting and assisting the Parkinsons community in County Wicklow. For further information on the new branch please contact Dara MacMahon at 086 8146926 or dara@parkinsons.ie

# East Wicklow branch of MS Ireland hold AGM and Awards ceremony

On Saturday, 24th February, the MS Ireland East Wicklow Branch held their AGM and Awards Ceremony in the beautiful Ashford Community & Heritage Centre.

The East Wicklow Branch has two annual awards, Branch Person of the Year and a Special Recognition Award.

The latter used to be called 'Branch Carer of the Year', but this restricted the award to full-time carers, which MS Ireland felt left out a lot of deserving people. In any case, full-time carers can also win the Special Recognition Award.

The 2024 Branch Person of the Year award went to Tom Allen. Tom has worked tirelessly

for the East Wicklow Branch over the years and has raised vital funds for them. These funds have been used for a range of purposes, including essential aids and appliances, financial assistance for Branch members in need, classes and activities and donations for MS research. Unfortunately, Tom couldn't attend on the day, but he got a big round of applause from all Branch members in attendance for all he has done.

The 2024 Special Recognition Award went

to Ros Mitchell. Ros has combined a very busy life with caring for and supporting her husband Mark Mitchell over the years. Without Ros's support, Mark would not have been able to do all he has done and continues to do for the Branch and MS Ireland as a whole.

The Wicklow branch stated: "Multiple Sclerosis, like other long-term illnesses, affects families as much as it does individuals. And it's wonderful to see the families of people with MS leading rich and fulfilling lives, while supporting those with MS to live rich and fulfilling lives as well. Congratulations, Ros!"



Pictured is Ros Mitchell with her grandchildren and John Mardirosian, Chairperson of MS Ireland East Wicklow Branch

# Anam Cara meeting for bereaved parents

National charity, Anam Cara, who support bereaved parents across the country, say they are so thankful to the public for all their fundraising efforts in the first couple of months of 2024.

The length and breath of the country is supporting the organisation with events such as sponsored walks, GAA games, corporate incentives, to name but a few.

On Tuesday 12th March, Anam Cara will hold their South East in-person meeting at The Brandon House Hotel, New Ross at 7:15pm.

All bereaved parents in the area are most welcome, regardless of the age of their child who has died or circumstances of death. There is no need to register, just turn up on the evening.

For further information on their services or to hold a fundraising event for Anam Cara, please contact them on info@anamcara.ie or 085 2888888



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

## SECTION 75 - ROADS ACT, 1993 PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF PUBLIC ROAD

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice of the temporary closure of the following public roads.

### Roads to be closed

From the exit at the Roundabout on the R772 at Yellow Lane; Liam Mellowes Avenue; The Navy Hill; Abbey Street; Back Street; Lower Main Street; Main Street, ending at the Junction at St. Mary's Road, Arklow.

### Period of closure

From 1:30pm to 3:00pm Sunday 17th March, 2024.

### Alternative Routes

Access from Collins Street, Connolly Street Griffith Street via St. Mary's Road to Upper Main Street.

Access from Abbeyville; Abbey Heights; Abbey Park, Church View, Rory O'Connor Place via Harbour Court, turning left at Tinahask Lower, turn right to South Green towards South Quay, Turn left towards R772, turning right onto Bridge.

Alternative route for Traffic accessing South of the town will be via Junction 21 (South) M11.

Traffic Management will be in place for the duration of the parade.

### Reason for Closure

To facilitate the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

# BIFE organise charity cake sale fundraiser for PIETA

BIFE Students recently organised a Cake Sale for Pieta House. The students completed this as part of their QQI Level 6 Business & Tourism Course - a practical application of learning.



Naomi Kidd, Vice Principal Louise Fortune, Business Management & Administration Co-ordinator Sarah King and Pauline Kavanagh with 2nd year students at BIFE's cake sale in aid of Pieta House.

It proved to be a huge success with them raising €558.80. The students worked on this project over the past number of weeks gaining valuable insight into the planning and organising and management of a real charity event. The students approached local businesses and invited them to sponsor the event.

Local companies gave generous support and without them the outcome would not have been possible.

A really big thanks must go out to Hannah and Joanne in Avoca, Audrey from Tesco, Adrian and Linda in Pettitt's Supervalu Bray, Henry from The Larder in Bray, Louise and all the Team from Get Fresh in the BIFE Canteen, Christian from Italic-



Sarah King and Ross Lee at BIFE's cake sale in aid of Pieta House.

atessen and indeed all the staff and students at BIFE in particular the Business & Tourism & Graphic Design Students who made the event happen.

Pieta provides free counselling to those with

suicidal ideation, those engaging in self-harm, and those bereaved by suicide.

Staff are fully qualified and provide a professional one-to-one therapeutic service.

Organisers of the cake sale said "We are delighted to help raise awareness today and hopefully help people in distress and bring them to a new place of hope through PIETA."

## 'Age limit for school bus drivers should be lifted'

The age limit of 70 for school bus drivers should be lifted to help alleviate capacity issues, according to Minister Simon Harris.

Minister Harris said, "Some families in Wicklow have gone through huge stress and difficulty since the introduction of the School Transport Scheme with many children left with no transport to school. A review of the School Transport Scheme has been completed and there are considerable changes being considered such as: The scrapping of the rule where students must choose the nearest school to their home to get State-funded transport; The scrapping

of the requirement to live 3.2km from a school for primary school students to qualify for the scheme; The reduction of the requirement to live 4.8km from a school for post primary school students to qualify for the scheme.

"However, many of the problems faced by families who haven't got access to school public transport are not being addressed in the short term. More needs to be done now or in the coming months to deal with the current problems faced by parents across Wicklow.

"We know there is a capacity issue and currently people over the age of 70 are not permitted to drive

school buses. I want to see the age limit for school bus transport removed. This move would significantly ease the concerns and pressures of the school transport scheme.

"There are experienced, healthy and qualified bus drivers over the age of 70 who are currently not being used to alleviate the pressures faced by school transport. Last year Bus Eireann said they would not reverse their current policy preventing 70 year olds from driving school buses. I am urging Bus Eireann to reconsider that position so that all Wicklow families can access the School Transport Scheme."



Minister Simon Harris

## Wicklow schools awarded for LGBTQ+ inclusion

Colaiste Chill Mhantain and North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School in County Wicklow are the first to be awarded the LGBTQ+ Quality Mark for their commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion. The post-primary schools recently finished an 18-month journey embedding LGBTQ+ inclusion across their people, policies and practices.

The LGBTQ+ Quality Mark is run by Belong To, Ireland's national LGBTQ+ youth organisation.

Students, teachers and principals from 37 schools came together to receive their award at a

celebratory event at the Foundry, Google Headquarters in Dublin.

The LGBTQ+ Quality

Mark initiative is a holistic approach to LGBTQ+ inclusion in post-primary schools that involves the whole school community.

Over the course of 18 months, schools are supported in implementing evidence-based actions across a number of key areas, which research shows improves the well-being and safety of LGBTQ+ students. The LGBTQ+ Quality Mark was created with support from Google.org.

The schools involved in the LGBTQ+ Quality Mark have worked to create an environment where all students feel safe and supported.

Speaking at the event, Jack Chambers, Minister of State and TD for Dublin West, said, "I am delighted to join students, teachers and principals from schools across Ireland as they receive their LGBTQ+ Quality Mark today. Belong To's LGBTQ+ Quality Mark recognises the importance of schools being places where members of the LGBTQ+ community can feel safe and supported.


"We know that a supportive school environment can have a hugely beneficial impact on the wellbeing and attainment of LGBTQ+ students. Together, we need to address the anti-LGBTQ+ stigma and discrimination that remains prevalent in our society. The Govern-

ment is committed to ensuring the safety, equality and inclusion of all students, including our LGBTQ+ students, by creating safe, supportive and inclusive school environments for all."

Courtney Hosp, Q Mark Coordinator from Colaiste Chill Mhantain

said: "Our school's mission states a commitment to 'a positive, supportive and inclusive learning environment, where each individual feels valued and respected.' We wanted to live this policy out in practice and so decided to take part in the Quality Mark process to ensure

all our young people see themselves celebrated and represented at school. We are so proud to have been awarded the Q Mark, marking the hard work our leadership, staff and students have made to making a better, more inclusive future for everyone."



**COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**SECTION 75 - ROADS ACT, 1993  
PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE  
OF PUBLIC ROAD**

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice of the temporary closure of the following public roads.

**Road to be closed**  
From the Junction of R753 and R747 (Aughrim Bridge) Glen Road, Chapel Lane and Rednagh Road, Aughrim

**Period of closure**  
From 11:00 am to 12:30 pm Sunday 17th March, 2024.

**Alternative Routes**  
R747 – Divert at Annacurra to Rednagh Road.  
R753 – Divert to R747 at Cronebeg.

**Reason for Closure**  
This closure is to facilitate the St. Patrick's Day parade.



Colaiste Chill Mhantain's Rachel Kearns, Aoife Treanor, Sophie Ferguson, Levi Conway, Courtney Hosp, Amy Ryan, Clara Earls, Hanna Wynne, and Sadbh Keating

# Wicklow students among winners of Rotary Youth Leadership Competition

Two Wicklow students, Lucy Curran and Juno Cherry-Roberts were among a group of just 24 teenagers from all over the island of Ireland to be presented with Rotary Youth Leadership Development certificates at the European Parliament's offices in Dublin recently.

The competition, which is one of Rotary Ireland's longest running youth projects, rewards young people with clear leadership potential based on their extra-curricular activities. It is run in conjunction with the European Parliament Liaison Office in Dublin.

Lucy who is a TY student at St Gerard's School Bray and Juno a 5th year student at East Glendalough School received their certificates from Rotary Ireland District Governor Kenny Fisher and Patrick O'Riordan, Head of Public Affairs at the European Parliament's office in Ireland.

The itinerary for the students' week-long all expenses paid trip included visits to Belfast, Dublin, and Strasbourg.

Juno, who is a hockey player, a

sailing instructor and also plays the piano and sings, is passionate about the environment and national and European politics. Representing Wicklow Rotary club, she said she would definitely recommend the competition to students.

"I gained enormously from the panel interviews for the competition and learned so much from preparing and researching various topics, from talking to my teachers, parents and Rotarians. The highlight of the trip for me was without doubt meeting new friends from Ireland and many other countries in the EU who we share so many similar interests with. I loved that we had so many opportunities to share and discuss our ideas and I feel it has taught me so much."

Lucy, who was representing Dun

Laoghaire Rotary Club, enjoys playing guitar, debating, public speaking and hockey. She said she learnt a huge amount from taking part.

"I really wanted to learn interview skills, about how to prepare and research properly. I did that and much more. I learned conversational skills, I learned about the importance about making eye contact and perhaps most importantly the value of interacting with others. Talking to other students with strong opinions and views on the world, who are so politically aware and intelligent was fascinating and helped to widen my own perspectives. That was the highlight for me. Nobody from St Gerard's had won this competition before so hopefully now I can share my experience and we'll promote it more."



Lucy Curran and Juno Cherry-Roberts with Rotary Ireland District Governor Kenny Fisher and Patrick O'Riordan, Head of Public Affairs at the European Parliament's office in Ireland.

# KWETB takes to the stage at annual education conference

Ken Seery, Director of Further Education and Training at Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) was a featured speaker at this year's Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) Further Education and Training conference which welcomed 250 delegates from across Ireland to Athlone the week before last. The title for this year's conference 'Pathways - Pathways to FET, Pathways in FET, Pathways from FET'.

Mr. Seery spoke on a panel about pathways from further education and training and the key steps required for a unified and flexible third level system. The event brought together over 250 representatives from across the sector and featured a line-up of over 30 speakers. Simon Harris, Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, addressed the conference on Thursday 22nd February giving the official Ministerial conference address.

Speaking ahead of the event, Minister Harris

said: "Over recent years we have worked incredibly hard to ensure no one is left behind when it comes to education. No matter who you are, what your background is or what your interests are you get an opportunity to reach your full potential. This conference is a timely opportunity. The impact ETBs have had on the learners but also on the wider communities they serve has been transformative. This two-day event is an invaluable opportunity to come together to learn from each other, to discuss the challenges and oppor-

tunities in the year ahead."

Commenting on the future of education, General Secretary of ETBI, Paddy Lavelle said: "The FET Strategy - Future FET Transforming Learning, acknowledges the key role of FET in driving both economic development and social cohesion. This roadmap for the sector is built around three core pillars of building skills; fostering inclusion; and facilitating pathways. This conference deals with one of those three Pillars - pathways."

Dr. Joseph Collins, Director of Further



Dara Ryder CE AHEAD, Ken Seery Director FET KWETB, Fiona Maloney Director NTO, Natasha Kinsella Regional Skills, Joe Collins Director FET ETBI, and Tom Grady

Education and Training (FET) at ETBI, said: "We can see clearly that Minister Harris has made significant inroads in

developing an integrated, coherent and well-articulated further and higher education system in which there are no dead

ends for learners. We have pathways from school to FET, within FET, between further and higher education, path-

ways into work and life-long pathways which can bring people back to learning at any stage of their career or life."

The conference took place over two days, with a full line-up of keynote speakers and panel discussions.

# Whitmore meets with Kilcoole Politics & Society students


Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore paid a visit to Colaiste Chraobh Abhann in Kilcoole recently where she met with the 5th-year Politics and Society students for a lively discussion on various topics, both local and national.



Jennifer Whitmore TD with Colaiste Chraobh Abhann Politics & Society students

Speaking after the visit, Deputy Whitmore said: "It was an absolute pleasure to meet with the students in Colaiste Chraobh Abhann, who are studying politics as part of their Leaving Cert. They invited me to discuss manifesto commitments and my thoughts on a vision for the local community and Ireland going forward. We had a great conversation covering everything from housing to the environment to how we can tackle inequality in Irish society."

"They are a credit to their school and their teacher, Ms. Egan. The inclusion of politics on the Leaving Certificate is hugely beneficial as it gives the next generation the chance to be empowered in their knowledge of the civic and political processes. I hope that the number of students taking it continues to grow as the years go on. However, I can already tell that there are lots of future politicians and community leaders in that class. I look forward to seeing their work in the years ahead!"



**COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**SECTION 75 - ROADS ACT, 1993  
PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE  
OF PUBLIC ROAD**

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice of the temporary closure of the following public roads.

**Road to be closed**  
R750 Main Street, Wicklow Town, from the Junction at Station Road to Market Square.

**Period of closure**  
2.30pm until 6:00pm Sunday 17th March 2024.

**Alternative Routes**  
From R750: Left onto Port access road (R999) over the bridge turning left onto South Quay.  
From Castle Street: Turn right onto Castle Street, left onto Quarantine Hill, right onto South Quay.

**Reason for Closure**  
This closure is to facilitate the St. Patrick's Day parade.

# 1,000 people take part in 10th anniversary Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10km race

On Saturday 24th February, 1,000 people took part in a very special tenth anniversary Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10KM Race, all the while raising vital funds for Wicklow Hospice.

Taking in the beautiful course through Avondale Forest Park, participants were warmed up by local DJ Albert Webster and were accompanied along the route by local athletes JJ O'Byrne and Anne Marie Kenny.

The funds raised will go directly to Wicklow Hospice, allowing for the continuation and development of care in its state-of-the-art facility in Magheramore and across the community through Wicklow Hospice's specialist Community Palliative Care Team.

Emily Barton, Senior Fundraising Manager at Our Lady's Hospice & Care

Services said: "As always, the people of Wicklow and beyond, came out in force to join us on the starting line and they were supported by friends and family along the route. It was very special to mark the tenth anniversary of the event with 1,000 participants running, walking, and supporting the care we provide at Wicklow Hospice."

"This event wouldn't be possible without the support of the local community. We would like to express a sincere thanks to Coillte and Beyond the Trees Avondale, as well as to An Garda Síochána, Wicklow Civil Defence,

Wicklow County Council, volunteer event stewards and donors who generously sponsored the participants. Not to mention DJ Albert Webster and athletes JJ O'Byrne and Anne Marie Kenny, who warmed up and supported our fantastic athletes," she added.

For the first time this year, all participants received a wooden medal, in an effort to reduce the carbon footprint of the event. Refill.ie also provided waste free water stations to reduce plastic waste. These were kindly sponsored by Wicklow Local Sports Partnership.



Pictured are JJ O'Byrne and Ann Marie Kenny, who warmed up the participants ahead of the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10km

## Winners on the day were:

### Half Marathon

- 1st Woman - Shelia O'Byrne - 1.26.52
- 2nd Woman - Aoife Devine - 1.32.41
- 3rd Woman - Amey Bermingham - 1.33.48

- 1st Man - Lee Lindsay - 1.22.39
- 2nd Man - Darragh Brennan - 1.23.00
- 3rd Man - Jack Teeling - 1.23.12

### 10KM

- 1st Woman - Nimah O'Connor - 37.16
- 2nd Woman - Eileen O'Toole - 44.50
- 3rd Woman - 45.57

- 1st Man - Christopher O'Reilly - 36.50
- 2nd Man - Ben Kinsella -- 38.56
- 3rd Man - Arran Sweetman - 38.58



Pictured is a group from Ladies Only Gym Bray, who participated in the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10km in Avondale Forest Park, Rathdrum.

# Bray Lions Club swim aids local charities

Bray Lions Club distributed €8,500 among four local charities at a ceremony in The Martello Bray on Thursday 22nd February, the proceeds of the annual Charity Sea Swim.

Club President Peter Doyle presented cheques to representatives of Bray Lakers, Ardmore Rovers, Bray Area Rough Sleepers Support (BARRS) and Bray Lions Club Senior Citizens Fund.

He thanked the 'more than two hundred brave swimmers' who took to the water from Bray Seafront on New Year's Day and whose sponsorship made a huge contribution to the success of the event. He also thanked those who came along to support the

swimmers and who contributed to the bucket collection, the management of the Martello, which hosted the swimmers and the volunteers who supported Bray Lions at the event.

The Charity Swim has been part of the New Year

tradition in Bray since 1984 when it was established with the dual purposes of having some fun and raising funds for local charities. The annual event has to date realised more than €388,000 for a long list of worthy local causes.



Pictured at the presentation of funds from Bray Lions Club were Fergus Finlay (Lakers), Michael Walby (BARRS), Rebecca McAuley (Lakers), Tony Salmon (Ardmore Rovers), Molly O'Rourke (Lakers), Norman Heagney (Bray Lions) and Bray Lions Club President Peter Doyle



John McEvoy, founder of Bray Charity Sea Swim with Rebecca McAuley and Molly O'Rourke of Lakers.

# Bray Hockey Club player named Wicklow Volunteer of The Year at Federation of Irish Sport awards

Ruth McDonagh from Bray Hockey Club has been named Wicklow Volunteer of the Year at the Federation of Irish Sport awards.

The Federation of Irish Sport recognised recipients of the 2023 Volunteers in Sports Awards, celebrating their dedication and giving freely of their time locally to make sport happen.

Supported by the National Network of 29 Local Sports Partnerships the committed volunteers from all across the country were honoured at an awards ceremony with special guest speaker Minister Thomas Byrne, Minister of State with responsibility for Sport and Physical Education presenting the 32 county awards. Over two decades Ruth McDonagh, of Bray Hockey Club, has consistently stepped up and has volunteered as team captain, social secretary, registrations secretary, coach, umpire, PRO and Vice President.

Ruth played a major part in establishing Bray Hockey's HockeyID team,

the Brayvets, which introduced hockey to local people with an intellectual disability from six years of age. This group are now well into their second year and have a full list of fixtures and are full members of Bray Hockey club.

She also spearheaded the senior ladies participation in the Leinster Indoor hockey league. Ruth is truly dedicated to the game and has also volunteered at provincial and national level.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, congratulated Ruth on her award saying: "It was fantastic to see such volunteerism recognised on a national stage. Sports clubs and community groups across the county rely on their volunteer base to operate and it is important we celebrate the time and effort these volunteers give up for the good of everyone."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, commended Ruth on her award and highlighted the meaningful and positive impact sport has on our physical and mental health, none of this would be possible without the volunteers at grassroots level.

Aisling Hubbard, Coordinator of Wicklow Sports Partnership, recognised the difficulty that has been faced by sports clubs to maintain volunteers, especially coming out of the COVID 19 pandemic. She highlighted the supports that are in place through the Sports Partnership, such as training and education supports and the club grants scheme that is currently open.

Aisling also thanked Ruth, and all the other volunteers throughout the county for their hours of dedication to their sport and community.



Denise O'Shea, Wicklow Sports Partnership; Aisling Hubbard, Coordinator, Wicklow Sports Partnership; Ruth McDonagh, Bray Hockey; Anne McCormack, CEO, Hockey Ireland and Trevor Watkins, Chairperson, Hockey Ireland

# Young Wicklow change-makers win funding for community garden project



Sean Kelly, Aran Ladwa and Josh Butler from Youthreach Wicklow Town

A team of young people from Youthreach in Wicklow town have been awarded €800 in funding to develop an inclusive community garden, as part of their participation in the Social Innovation Den programme delivered by Young Social Innovators (YSI) in conjunction with IBM.

Teenage change-makers Sean Kelly, Aran Ladwa and Josh Butler recently successfully pitched for support for their project before a YSI Den panel of representatives from IBM, Community Foundation Youth Panel, Education Authority NI, EirGrid and Cork City Council, to enable them to access Social Impact Fund sup-

port to advance their initiative.

The YSI teams that take part in the Social Innovation Den programme can request three types of support for their projects - money, means and mentoring. Youthreach Wicklow Town requested financial support and mentoring from the panel which they were granted.

The team's project is titled Innovative Inclusion and it aims to

address the issue of inclusivity, with a particular focus on homelessness and older people. The YSI Den funding and mentoring will help them develop an open garden that the whole community can enjoy, not only from an aesthetic point of view but as a hub that can help address social issues.

Congratulating the Wicklow students, Roger Warnock, CEO, Young Social Innovators, said: 'Sean, Aran and Josh from Youthreach Wicklow Town are exemplary young social innovators and we are delighted to help them get their project up and running to bring

about positive change in their community. Our Den panellists rewarded these young people for their ability to develop a sustainable, high-impact project, as well as for their passion for social innovation.


"We are delighted that in 2024, the Social Impact Fund is supported by IBM. I would like to thank IBM and all our Den partners, including our panellists."

To date, the YSI Den has provided over €150,000 in grant funding to support youth-led ideas for social change throughout Ireland.

For more information about Young Social Innovators, see [www.youngsocialinnovators.ie](http://www.youngsocialinnovators.ie).



Runners up of the Wicklow & District Lions Club Quiz in Chesters Ashford; Catriona Tuite, Rosmary Kavanagh, Paula Johnson and Jennifer Mates



**COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**SECTION 75 - ROADS ACT, 1993  
PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE  
OF PUBLIC ROAD**

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice of the temporary closure of the following public roads.

**Roads to be closed**  
Main Street Rathdrum - R755.  
From the Junction at Parnell Memorial Park to the Junction of L-97554 Lower Street.

**Period of closure**  
From 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm Sunday, 17th March 2024.

**Alternative Routes**  
L- 97554 – Lower Street, Rathdrum.  
Traffic Management will be in place for the duration of the parade.

**Reason for Closure**  
To facilitate the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

# The Devil's Spine Band coming to Tinahely

Honor Heffernan - vocals / Trevor Knight - keyboard / Ed Deane - guitar / Garvan Gallagher - bass / Conor Murray - drums

*Courthouse Arts Centre, Friday 15th March 8pm, €22/€20*

**Trevor Knight never sits still!** In a storied creative career that's seen him in a myriad of rolls such as: touring musician with legendary 80's avant-pop outfit Auto Da Fé, composer, collaborator and theatre director and sound designer, Trevor is well known on the Irish scene as a constant innovator.

Having received many accolades for his own works, he is also renowned for having rubbed musical shoulders with the productions of many household names including Paul Brady, Philip Lynott, Honor Heffernan, Mary Coughlan, Roger Doyle and Donovan. (Juliet Turner, Camille O'Sullivan) He composed the music for and toured the world with the hit theatre production "Catalpa" (including performances at The Courthouse!)

March 15th 2024 sees Knight and co. at Tinahely Courthouse Arts Centre with the

Wicklow launch of their highly anticipated double album "Golden Arrows of the Moon" with his fascinating ongoing project, 'The Devil's Spine Band.' Leaning heavily into the genre of 'Dark Cabaret,' (previously explored with 'The Whistling Girl'- settings of Dorothy Parker's poetry with Honor Heffernan), The Devil's Spine Band takes its' lead from Oscar Wilde's 1882 trip to Leadville Colorado, then explores all things 'Cowboy' and 'Wilde-West' in an Americana explosion, heavily tinged with Knight's unique innovative

flair. The music features settings of a number of Wilde's poems together with original lyrics- It's edgy stuff; improvisational, rockin', by times ambient electronic and by times a whoopin' and a hollerin' kind of an affair, that will take the audience on a unique journey with some of Ireland's finest musicians and performers. Much of the music was co-written with Ireland's finest living blues guitarist Ed Deane (Skid Row, Frankie Miller Band, Dana Gillespie), who has featured in all incarnations of the Devil's Spine Band.



## Naturalness: an exhibition by Paula Iacovone

*Signal Arts Centre, Monday 27th May to Sunday 9th June*

**Paula Iacovone's exhibition will showcase works with the motifs of flowers because flowers are nature's biggest show-offs. She intends to celebrate them in her work.**

Her paintings are all in oils and depict the Magical Realism realm from which she draws inspiration. Paula graduated from The Institute of Art, Design and Technology in 2024, with a BA Honours in Art, her bouquets are often accompanied by creatures, like birds, fish, and small critters. Touching upon a mysterious nature with a colourful, vibrant, and energetic palette where lyric painting informs a universal congenial idiom.



Exploring alternate existences by tapping

into unknown scenes and various other dimensions, she invites viewers to a whimsical, colourful journey to a world that transcends logic.



## Good Craic Comedy Club returns to Bray

**Good Craic Comedy Club returns to The Harbour Bar on Wednesday, March 13th with a stacked line up of the finest up and coming acts on the Irish comedy scene.**

The audience are in for a great night's entertainment with guest co-host Ian Lynam, regular host Sean Begley and headliner Ben Verth introducing the next crop of future stars to the stage.

Ben regularly gigs all over the UK and Ireland, and has been described as 'snappy and slow-burning, crude and classy' (The Skinny) with 'sharp writing, beautifully timed' (The Scotsman) and a 'stage presence that ricochets off the back wall' (Broadway Baby).

He has written and performed for some legendary TV and Radio shows back in his native Scotland (BBC's The Karen Dunbar Show, Only An Excuse?, Scot Squad and The Good, The Bad and The Unexpected, STV's The Late Show) and he is co-founder of Edinburgh's multi-award-winning Monkey Barrel Comedy Club.

He is co-host of the hugely popular Paddy Irishman, Paddy Englishwoman, Paddy Scotsman podcast, which recently sold out their live show recording at the Bray Comedy Festival.

Catch Ben and several other great acts upstairs at The Harbour Bar on March 13th. It's Free entry as always but get down early to guarantee your seat. Doors 7.45pm, show at 8.15pm.



Headliner Ben Verth



Joanna Kidney, Kevin O'Byrne, Joan Davis, Theresa Nanigan, Colm Keegan and Philip St. John at the recent Wicklow Artists Salon in the Mermaid Arts Centre.



# 17th South Wicklow Drama Festival

St. Brigid's Hall Carnew, Saturday 15th March - Saturday 23rd March (with exception of Sunday)

The 17th South Wicklow Drama Festival will take place in St. Brigid's Hall, Carnew from Saturday the 15th of March to Saturday the 25th of March, 2024 (Nightly at 8pm with the exception of Saturday 23rd March when it begins at 7.30pm). The Committee once again has a wonderful and varied line up of plays with many of the local groups taking part along with Drama Groups from Counties Laois and Dublin.

**Adjudicator: Imelda McDonagh ADA**

The Chairman and Committee of South Wicklow Drama Festival are delighted to welcome Arklow based Imelda McDonagh as Adjudicator for the 2024 Festival. Imelda is a multi-award-winning director and actress with a first-class honours M.A. in Theatre Studies. She is a qualified Make-Up Artist (recently updated London 2022) and holds a Licentiate in Speech and Drama from

the London College of Music. Since Imelda retired from teaching in 2012, she has been adjudicating Drama Festivals the length and breadth of Ireland. She is currently President of the Association of Drama Adjudicators, and has been the adjudicator for both the Confined All Ireland when it was in Tubbercurry and the Open All Ireland Drama in Athlone, and in addition has adjudicated the Macra na Feirme and UK One Act Finals in 2023.

A lifetime of performance has led to the creation of some of her favourite roles, including Lady Bracknell in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Blanche in *William's A Streetcar named Desire*, Stephanie in *Kempinski's Duet for One*, Gertrude in *Shakespeare's Hamlet* and Kate in *Miller's All My Sons*, as well as the monologue plays: *Baglady* by Frank McGuinness, *Jennifer Johnston's Christine* and *Dermot Bolger's The Holy Ground*.

Imelda has won many awards for both Drama and Musicals and was awarded The Civic Merit Award for her services to the community by President Michael D. Higgins.

Imelda is currently directing *Happy Days* for Enniscorthy Musical Society.

### Sponsors

The South Wicklow Drama Festival committee said "We take this opportunity of thanking our Main Sponsor, Altura Credit Union Ltd., Carnew and all of our Sponsors, patrons and advertisers without whom we could not host a festival.

Sponsors: Quinn Property, Candy's Carnew, Kenny's Corner House, McCreas, Jim Byrne's, Osbourne's Centra, South East Security and Safety Ltd, Boggan Motors, and K&K Windows."

Patron Tickets for the Festival are available from any of the Festival Committee, from Mark Kennedy in Hall's Shop, Main Street, Carnew; Carnew Training & Consultancy Centre and from Candy's, Carnew. Purchasing a patron ticket enables you to see all eight of the following plays for just €45.

"The standard of amateur drama throughout the country is very high and it is once again a privilege to bring quality performances to the stage in Carnew."



Ciaran Tyrrell, Sougie Doyle, Tommy Kavanagh, Nick Hayes and Billy McCreery at the launch of the South Wicklow Drama Festival in Jim Byrne's, Carnew.

Line up of Plays Nightly at 8pm except final night - 7.30pm start.

On Friday, March 15, the Clodiagh Players will perform 'Trad' by Mark Doherty (sponsored by McCrea's Bar & Lounge, Carnew), with the Kilmuckridge Drama Group performing 'I do not like thee Dr Fell' by Bernard Farrell (sponsored by Jim Byrne's Bar & Lounge).

There will be no play on Sunday, March 17, while on Monday, Tom Murphy's 'The Wake' will be performed by Bridge Drama (sponsored by Boggan Motors, Gorey), with Camross Drama Group performing 'The Gin Game'

by DL Coburn on Tuesday 19 (sponsored by K&K Windows, Craanford).

The Bunclody/Kilmishall Drama Group will take to the stage on Wednesday, March 20, with 'The Lonesome West' by Martin McDonagh (sponsored by Osbourne's Centra, Carnew), while the Ballycogley Players will perform 'Out of Order' by Ray Cooney (sponsored by Candy's Carnew) on Thursday, March 21.

Rounding off the festival, 'Hooked' by Gillian Grattan will be performed by the Kilrush Drama Group (sponsored by South East Security and Safety Ltd) on Friday night, with the Balally Players closing the festival on Saturday, March 23, with 'Alone it Stands' by John Breen (sponsored by Kenny's Corner House).

The teas served during the interval are being sponsored by Quinn Property, Gorey and Carnew.

### Festival Launch

The festival launch took place in Jim Byrne's Lounge on Thursday 22nd February. The committee were honoured by the presence of acclaimed writer Ettie Kilbride who recently awarded a Lifetime achievement award for her outstanding contributions to Scor and the GAA.

Ettie talked about acting as a young girl in late 50's early 60's with Carnew Drama Group, when they travelled around to some of the festivals, particularly in The Tara Hall in Courtown, where they met with some formidable adjudicators.

She spoke about lack of facilities and places to rehearse at that time, in comparison to the wonderful facility that is in Carnew now in the form of St. Brigid's Hall. She complimented the committee for their commitment in running the festival every year and wished them every success for the 2024 Festival.

### Art Exhibition

In association with the Festival, Carnew Community Art Group will hold an Art Exhibition in Roberts' Garage Adjacent to St. Brigid's Hall which will open on Thursday evening the 14th of March, and will run daily for the duration of the Festival.

[www.southwicklowdramafestival.com](http://www.southwicklowdramafestival.com)



Kevin McEvoy, Ettie Kilbride, Debbie Furlong and Eamonn Doran at the launch of the South Wicklow Drama Festival in Jim Byrne's, Carnew.

# The Greystones Arts Centre Initiative launches

Last week marked the dawn of a transformative journey into the realm of community creativity, inclusion and expression as the Greystones Arts Centre Initiative was launched.

In a statement, the Greystones Arts Centre Initiative Committee said: "Driven by our commitment to foster cultural enrichment and stimulate societal transformation, our initiative seeks to elevate the arts to new heights, empowering

artists, nurturing creativity, and inspiring positive change within our communities.

Through a multi-faceted approach, the Arts Initiative aims to:

1. **Empower Artists:** "We believe in the power of artists as agents of

change. Our initiative will provide resources, support, and platforms for emerging and established artists to showcase their talents, amplify their voices, and reach broader audiences."

2. **Foster Creativity:** "Creativity knows no bounds. We are dedicated

to cultivating environments that stimulate imagination, innovation, and originality. From workshops and masterclasses to collaborative projects, we aspire to ignite the creative spark within individuals of all ages and backgrounds."

3. **Promote Diversity and Inclusion:** "The arts have the power to transcend barriers and unite diverse voices. Our initiative is committed to celebrating and amplifying diverse perspectives, cultures, and identities. We strive to create inclusive spaces where everyone feels valued, represented, and empowered to share their stories."

4. **Inspire Social Change:** "Art has the power to challenge, provoke, and inspire. Through thought-provoking exhibitions, performances, and events, we aim to spark conversations, raise awareness, and drive positive social change on

issues ranging from environmental sustainability to social justice and beyond."

"We invite artists, creators, enthusiasts, and change makers alike to join us on this exhilarating journey as we embark on a mission to unleash the transformative power of the arts. See our Facebook page Greystones Arts.

"Greystones Arts Centre Initiative was created in August 2023, by a group of diverse people living in Greystones and close environs. With a steadfast commitment to establishing a dedicated art hub, we remain focused on our main objective to petition our local Councillors in Wicklow for financial and practical support in developing a much needed and thriving art hub in Greystones. Together, let's unveil creativity, inspire change, and shape a brighter future through the arts."



L-R: Michelle Owen, Dereck Mitchell, Cllr, Mary A Kelly (Chair), Frances Browner, (Sec.), Orla Finn, Emma Jane Rushworth, Nessa McCormack & Deirdre McKernan Crosby. Pic by Annie Thompson.

## Meet the Committee

**Mary Kelly** - Chair. Award winning and internationally acclaimed artist, exhibiting extensively throughout Ireland, Germany, USA, England and France. <https://marykelly.website>

**Frances Browner** - Secretary. Award-winning poet, author, creative writing tutor. Debut novel, *A Bronx Summer*, launched Nov 2023.

**Jack Clarke** - Photographic tutor and photographer

**Orla Finn** - A background in Public Administration responsible for the co-ordination and execution of projects for public servants in Central and Eastern Europe.

**Nessa McCormack** - Abstract artist, exploring complex patterns emerging from worn textured surfaces, a distillation of what calls her to dive deeper.

**Deirdre McKernan Crosby** - Portrait and landscape artist and Poet.

**Cllr Derek Mitchell** - "I believe in this initiative. Greystones should have an Arts Centre to give art a place in this growing community."

**Michelle Owen** - Visual artist based in Greystones, inspired by Irish landscapes.

**Emma Jane Rushworth** - Works on both private and public sculpture of wildlife that have flown, hopped and bounded around the globe. <http://emmajanerushworth.ie/>

Lynne Loftus

# KIA EV9 brings all Ireland in range

Kia's top of the line battery electric EV9 bring all of Ireland into range, even on the worst day possible. Valentia Island in very West Kerry is 360km from Bray and even if you lobbed off 25% of the range for cold weather and other factors, the 563 km range of the new EV6 will get you there without too much angst.

by Martin McCarthy

A bit of planning for the return journey will be needed - but not much. The EV9 is an all-electric SUV designed and built for modern lifestyles in the electrified era. As the company's first three-row electric flagship SUV, the spacious, and striking EV9 is a rugged, sophisticated, and technologically advanced electric vehicle. Available as a six or seven-seater, it combines bold styling, premium versatility, multi-faceted connectivity, and Kia's

signature 'Opposites United' design to deliver a vehicle that's ready for anything, with a projected driving range of up to 563 kilometres.

This is an imposing machine - stunning modern inside and out - and given the Korean carmakers enviable build quality reputation, it promises a emissions free motoring for a decade or more.

The IT connectivity is very sophisticated but not bewildering. There are conventional buttons for items like the radio volume - so you are getting the best of IT technology, usefully employed.

The highlights for the EV9 are:

- Target driving range of up to 563kms
- 800V ultra-fast charging: Charge to 249km in 15 minutes
- 7-Seater Earth Model - €77,500
- 6 & 7-Seater GT-line Models - €85,500

Adventurous 6 or 7-seater SUV is rugged yet sophisticated, paving the way to emission-free, connected, and autonomous mobility. Leather alternatives, bio-materials and recycled plastic kick off Kia's three-step shift to sustainable materials.



The Kia EV9

# First ever Town Centre First plans unveiled

The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, Kieran O'Donnell TD have today published the first ever Town Centre First plans for 26 towns across every county.

The Plans which were developed in consultation with local communities represent the vision of local people for their area and contain proposals for a diverse range of projects such as redeveloping derelict sites, creating community parks and walkways, boosting SME and tourism potential, and protecting historical landmarks.

Blessington has been announced under Phase 1 for a Pilot Town Centre First Plan, as an eligible town, while Newtownmountkennedy has been announced under Phase 2 as one of the next 26 towns approved to develop Town Centre First Plans.

The Ministers were joined at the Launch by the new Town Regeneration Officers who have been appointed in every Local Authority to drive implementation of the new plans with the support of Government funding through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Town Centre First Heritage Revival (THRIVE) Scheme and the Historic Towns Initiative.

Speaking at the launch, Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, said: Comm-

unities are at the heart of rural Ireland. Town Centre First is all about empowering people to develop a vision for their town that can make it a better place to live, work, invest in and enjoy. These Plans and the new Town Regeneration Officers are about ensuring there is a strategic and coherent approach at local level to tackling vacancy and dereliction in our towns and villages. Government is firmly committed to strategic projects that will transform rural Ireland such as under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, and we are already seeing the hugely positive impacts of investment right across the country such as the fantastic new Community Centre we are opening here in Patrickswell this morning.

Minister Humphreys also announced the next 26 Towns who have been approved to develop Town Centre First Plans:

"I am delighted to publish the first ever Town Centre First Plans today and I want to commend the local Communities and Town Teams for their work in developing these comprehensive locally-led plans. I am pleased to also announce the next 26 successful towns across the country who we will support with funding of €30,000 each to complete a comprehensive town plan to help develop their town centres."

Town Centre First supports the objectives

of the national rural development policy, Our Rural Future, in revitalising rural towns and engages communities through 'Town Teams'. Every town is different, and so local visions take account of these unique challenges, needs and opportunities.

Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, Kieran O'Donnell, said: "It is a pleasure to launch the inaugural Town Centre First Plans today here in Limerick. This Government has committed to multi-billion euro investment in regenerating and revitalising towns and urban centres across Ireland. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is supporting the delivery of the Town Centre First policy approach through major funding schemes such as the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, the Croí Cúnaite Fund and Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant and the ERDF supported THRIVE Fund.

"The Town Centre First approach empowers local communities and businesses, supported by Local Authorities, to guide and direct investment to maximise the particular strengths and assets of their town. "In a joint initiative, my Department along with DRCD has established a National Town Centre First Office, within the LGMA, to support delivery of the policy. I also wish to congratulate and commend all the local communities and Town

Teams for their dedicated work in designing these exciting Town Centre First plans - I look forward to seeing them fully implemented in the time ahead.

Town Centre First also supports the objectives of the National Planning Framework and Housing for All by unlocking the potential of vacant and underused buildings to increase housing supply and attract more people to live and work in our town centres.

TCF National co-ordinator, Mairead Hunt, noted that towns now have a unique opportunity to participate in Town Centre First and create more vibrant and attractive town centres.

She continued: "Our Town Teams are doing fantastic work around the country creating and driving forward ambitious plans. We want to see many more Town Teams, so it is very welcome that the Department of Rural and Community Development is giving local authorities funding

of up to €10,000 to establish new Town Teams or build up existing teams. Today we have also launched a new Town Centre First website where people can find out how to get involved."

Launched in 2022, Town Centre First is driving one of the biggest ever programme of investments in rural Ireland and has a core aim of confronting dereliction and the general

decline in the health of Ireland's town centres.

To find out more about the initiative and how communities can become involved, visit [www.towncentrefirst.ie](http://www.towncentrefirst.ie)



## WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Robert Magee seeks retention permission for: Rooflight to front slope of roof to existing dwelling at 14 Glenheron Walk, Charlesland, Greystones, Co. Wicklow.

The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

## WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Lucy O'Connell, seek planning permission for the retention of my dwelling with an added single storey sunroom extension (18 sq.m.) to the side and also the removal of Condition 2 of the previous Grant of Permission (Ref. 98/9023) which proposed a sterilisation agreement for the remaining lands at Derrybeg, Templecarrig Lower, Delgany, Co. Wicklow.

The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

## WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I Jack Millar am applying for permission for a development on land at Glendarragh Lane, Glendarragh, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow comprising the erection of one detached house containing three floor levels and providing three bedrooms, an open plan kitchen / dining / living area along with ancillary bathroom, hallway and utility accommodation, the installation of a Sepron 2000 secondary sewage treatment system and polishing filter, the drilling of a well for domestic water supply purposes, the shared use of an existing vehicular entrance and driveway (the latter of which is to be extended) off Glendarragh Lane, the provision of a garden, a private driveway into the site itself and a car parking area, as well as all associated or ancillary site works, including a change of ground levels. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours and that a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

## WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Gopal and Laura Naidoo seek permission for a part single storey part two storey extension, alterations and associated works to the front and side of an existing dwelling at 1 Willow Park, Delgany Wood, Delgany, County Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

## WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We St. Anthonys Kilcoole United FC seek planning permission for floodlighting of the soccer pitches at Wheeler Park including the erection of 6 x 15 m high lighting columns and provision of a generator adjacent to the site boundary at Pitches DW1 & DW2, Finn Park, Knockroe, Lotts Lane, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

# ATTENTION

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# IHF Wicklow Branch Employee of the Year Winner commended



Cyril Brennan, Senior Conference and Banqueting Bartender at Tulfarris Hotel and Golf Resort, Employee of the Year Winner from the Wicklow Branch of the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF), was commended at the annual IHF conference which took place Monday 26th and Tuesday 27th of February at the Slieve Russell Hotel, Co. Cavan. Pictured (left) are IHF President Denyse Campbell and Cyril Brennan.

More than 400 hotel and guesthouse owners and managers from across Ireland gathered for the conference, discussing the opportunities and challenges facing Ireland's tourism and hospitality industry in 2024 and beyond.



Garrett and Caoimhe O'Reilly at the Wicklow Ukrainian Hub's Remembrance Day event marking two years of war in Ukraine

# Hoteliers report drop in business sentiment for 2024

*Rising business costs cited as the most serious challenge facing hotels this year*

Stubbornly high business operating costs, coupled with concerns about the economic outlook for the year ahead, are weighing on the minds of hoteliers as they gather today for the Irish Hotels Federation's (IHF) 86th Annual Conference taking place this year in the Slieve Russell Hotel, County Cavan.

Following a strong performance in 2023, IHF President Denyse Campbell pointed to a more challenging outlook for the Irish hotels sector in the year ahead, with forward bookings underperforming and business sentiment among hoteliers taking a hit. Recent industry research carried out by the IHF shows a drop in levels of optimism across the sector, with only 47% of hoteliers reporting a positive outlook for trading conditions over the next 12 months. This contrasts with 74% who reported a positive outlook at the same time last year.

Hoteliers ranked rising business costs as the most serious challenge facing their business this year, with early forecasts indicating further increases of in excess of 8% in operating costs over the year ahead, significantly out-

pace levels of inflation within the wider economy. This follows a period of already unprecedented cost increases over the last two years. Some 79% of hotels indicated they were concerned about the outlook for the global economy and the potential impact on their business. Forward bookings for the year ahead are now down 4.5% compared to this time last year, with 53%

of hotels reporting a net decrease in bookings. Of particular concern is the domestic market along with the UK and rest of Europe. Bookings for North America are holding up, however, which is very welcome given the growing importance of this key market as a source of tourism revenue. Ms Campbell said: "While it is too early to predict the overall perfor-

mance for the year, initial indications are concerning and highlight the challenges our industry faces across key markets. This is at a time when consumer finances are under ongoing pressure and businesses are dealing with additional costs and a sharp rise in interest rates. We are also seeing the impact of the

Government's decision to increase tourism VAT, making us an outlier with the third highest rate of VAT in Europe.

"It is incumbent on the Government to do more to tackle the very high cost of doing business within the Irish economy. This is a major challenge for tourism and hospitality, our largest indigenous employer. Increasing costs are continuing to erode our competitiveness as a destination and jeopardise the sustainability of our wider industry - a vital part of the economy supporting some 270,000 livelihoods, 70% of which are outside of Dublin. More needs to be done to address Government-controlled costs, particularly

for labour intensive industries such as tourism."

Commenting on levels of ongoing investment within the sector Ms Campbell noted that, having invested significantly in their properties over the last two years, many hotels are continuing to prioritise investment in maintaining a consistently high-quality offering for visitors - a cornerstone of our competitiveness. Some 78% of hoteliers indicate they are planning refurbishment projects and increased capital investment over the next 12 months, including refurbishment of guest bedrooms (56%), refurbishment of common areas (47%) and guest technology (30%).

CLASSIFIEDS

### THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

Dear Heart of Jesus in the past I have asked for many favours. This time I ask you this very special one. (Mention request) Take it, dear Heart of Jesus and place it within your broken Heart where your Father sees it. Then, in his merciful eyes it will become your favour not mine. St Anthony and St Jude, helper of the hopeless, aid me in my distress. Amen. Say this prayer for three days. Promise publication and favour will be granted. Never known to fail. Thank You. M.C.

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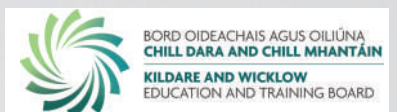
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